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A CRITICAL NOTE ON THE VALLABHADEVA'S COMMENTARY ON THE SHISHUPALAVADHAM

BY

J. D. ZADOO, M. A., M. O. L., SHASTRI.

SUPERINTENDENT ARCHÆOLOGY, RESEARCH
AND MUSEUM DEPARTMENT,
SRINAGAR, KASHMIR.

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Rajew

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INTRODUCTORY.

The following note is written by way of introduction to the Vallabhadeva's commentary on the Shishupalavadha, which has been edited and published by the Research Department in the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies. Vallabhadeva, as will be seen later, wrote this commentary in the early years of the 10th century A. D. Being a decided improvement upon those commentaries which have preceded it[1], it commands a very respectable position as the oldest and the best commentary available. It has been freely drawn upon by the latest commentators such as Charitra-vardhana, Mallinātha etc., etc.

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[1] There are in the body of the commentary stray allusions to various commentaries by differrent authors who have preceded Vallabhadeva. Cf. कृता महद्भिर्यत एव टीका etc. etc., (Shishu- com). It is regretted not even one out of these is available now.

It is called the Sāratīkā, the essence of commentaries or 'Sandeha-vishaushadha'—an antidote against the poison of doubts—and has been written on the Kathambhūtinī style, *i. e.* in a manner quite peculiar to Kashmir and the North-western India, where the study of the commentaries of our author is much in vogue. The Kathambhūtinī style of writing commentaries is an analytical one (Khandānvyā) and is quite different from the commentary called Dandānvayā, the running prose intermixed with explanatory quotations here and there. The former explains the meaning of the stanzas in the form of questions and answers—in a way not unlike the modern direct method, which makes the whole idea of the stanza quite intelligible even to the average reader.

Writing of commentaries in the form of questions and answers seems to have been the practice in Kashmir during the time of Vallabhadeva—an originality claimed perhaps by the Kashmir writers only; and this has an advantage over other forms of commentaries in as much as it explains in a clear and lucid way the difficult puns upon words and other poetical intricacies indulged in by the writers of the Mahākāvyas. It makes the average reader's path smooth and clear to go through the text and understand its niceties, and is in a way superior to the commentaries written by Mallinātha and others which are composed in long and complex sentences intermingled here and there with long quotations from Panini's grammar, Smritis, treatises on music and various lexicons.

It should not be taken to mean that the way in which Mallinātha and other commentators have done their work is in any way defective. It is like a long march without posts and stages to gain the object in view and necessarily gives rise to a feeling of exhaustion in the mind of a reader; while the way adopted by our commentators has clear-cut sign-posts and easy halting places to lead him to the destination with a feeling of renewed strength and freshness. The undiminished interest and zeal with which the commentaries of Vallabha are studied here as well as in other parts of India, is a tangible proof of his recognition of merit by the people and the appreciation and respect which they have for his learned art, even to this day. Even now the sanskrit scholars here have continued the same practice of teaching Mahākāvyas as was in vogue in the time of our author, and they very seldom deviate from the path trodden during the last decade of centuries.

It is a matter for regret that in absence of the commentaries written by other authors who flourished before Vallabha, we cannot lay our hands on any material for comparison or contrast of the present work; yet from the humble statement which Vallabha makes in the beginning of his commentary we are led to believe that he has done his best to utilize the material at his disposal, accepting as a matter of fact the better explanations and rejecting the ambiguous and controversial meanings from his predecessors' writings. More than half a dozen commentaries have since succeeded that of Vallabha, last among them being the famous fourteenth century commentary of Mallinātha. His commentary on this Mahākāvya and other poems is widely read in India as it is the latest and therefore an improvement upon the older commentaries; but when compared carefully with the present commentary, it is clearly found that he has actually borrowed his explanations from Vallabha especially with regard to such points as could not be settled without erudite discussion. Vallabha's explanations are original, polished and full of learned citations and they stand unparalleled even when compared with those of Mallinātha or other commentators.

Vallabha's learning seems to have been very vast. From the perusal of his commentary we learn that he was well versed in Panini, Patanjali's Bhāshyam, rhetoric, sciences of Music and Drama, Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra, astronomy, politics, Smritis and Purāns. Like a modern scholar he has collated and compared his text while he was writing commentary on it (vide commentary shloka 58, canto VI.) His commentary on Ekākshara and Dvyakshara shlokas is quite different from that by the later authors. He was very well acquinted with different Prākrits such as Saurasenī, Māgadhī, Ardhamāgadhi etc.

Nothing much is known about him except that his father was Anandadeva, his son Chandrāditya and grandson Kayyaṭa. He was a Kashmirian by birth and a follower of Kashmir Shaivism[1].

THE DATE OF THE COMMENTATOR

There seems to have been three of the name of Vallabha The first is called Utprekshā-vallabha, *i. e.* Vallabha who made himself famous by making free use of a figure of speech called Utprekshā (उत्प्रेक्षा) —poetic fancy. His Bhikshātana-kāvya is available only in fragments. He belongs to an older generation of poets, such as Kālidāsa, Bāṅa etc. The second is Vallabhadeva, an anthologist (c. 1450 A. D.), the author of a Subhāshitāvali. He also belonged to Kashmir The third is our commentator, who is much anterior to the second He seems to have flourished in the beginning of the 10th century A. D. as is corroborated by the colophon at the end of the commentary on Devīshataka of Anandavardhanāchārya, which runs thus:

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[1] Cf. Colophon at the end of each Canto of the Maghakavya, where he says that he is a son of Ananddeva. Also cf. Commentary on Devishataka of Anandvardhana by Kayyata, where we come across the following verse:

वल्लभदेवायनितश्चन्द्रादित्यादवाप्य जन्मेमाम् ।
कय्यटनामारचयद्विवृतिं देवीशतस्तोत्रे ॥

It may be noted that this Kayyata is quite different from the one who is the son of Jayyata and the writer of Pradipa, (1300 A. D.)

“ वल्लभदेवायनितश्चन्द्रादित्यादवाप्य जन्मेमाम् ।
कय्यटनामारचयद्विवृतिं देवीशतस्तोत्रे ॥

वसुमुनिगगनोदधि (४०७८) समकाले याते कलेस्तथा लोके ।
द्वापञ्चाशे (५२) वर्षे रचितेयं भीमगुप्तनृपे ॥ ”

i. e. ‘In the Kali era 4078 (corresponding to 977 A. D.), during the reign of the King Bhīmgupta of Kashmir (975—979 A. D.) Kayyaṭa, son of Chandrāditya and the grandson of Vallabhadeva composed a commentary on Devīshataka.’

The colophon mentioned above is a strong and clear proof to establish the existence of Vallabhadeva in the early years of the 10th century A. D. The two stanzas at the end of the present commentary, *i. .e*

"सूनुरानन्ददेवस्य रणे (?) भूव्योमभास्वतः ।
व्यधत्त टीकां काव्येऽस्मिन् वल्लभः सूरिवल्लभाम् ॥

श्लोकानां सूचने नैषा सहस्राणि तु द्वादश ।
मूलग्रन्थविहीना तु विद्ज्जनमनोहरा ॥"

seem to contain a statement quite contradictory to the one made by Kayyaṭa in the Devīshataka. They say that in the 1201 (भू-व्योम-भास्वत:) son of Anandadeva (Vallabhadeva) composed a commentary on the present Kāvya, which without taking into account the number of verses in the text, amounts to 12,000 verses. According to this, the present commentary seems to have been composed in the Shaka year 1201 (?) which is given by the words 'Bhū' = 1, 'Vyoma' = 0, and 'Bhāsvat' = 12, the word 'Rane' being unintelligible. This era corresponds to 1336 Anno Vikrami or 1279 A. D. and does, in no way, accord with the admission that Vallabhadeva lived in the beginning of 10th century A. D. confirmed by the colophon in the Devīshataka. The colophon in question seems to involve a misleading statement. It is a clear interpolation introduced by some irresponsible copyist in as much as it does not fit in with the style of composition of

Vallabhadeva. A commentator of his calibre would not have used the word 'विद्वज्जनमनोहरा' just after the word 'सूरिवल्लभाम्' which is mere repetion of the same meaning *i. e.* 'pleasing or charming to the learned'. It lacks in the strength of high class versification or poetry and exposes the author's meagre knowledge of sanskrit vocabulary. More awkward than the two words referred to above is the use of the particle 'तु' in the last stanza of this colophon, which can only be written by a third rate versifier and cannot be comprehended coming down from the pen of a commentator of Vallabha's status. The use of the particle 'तु' is not only repugnant but also dtrimental to the अनष्टुभ् metre in the stanza. This colophon, therefore, is only an interpolation without any value of modern research and is a weak proof to shatter the opinion of Vallabhadeva's having existed in c 925 A. D.

HIS WORKS

As a famous and successful commentator Vallabha has written commentaries on the well-known Kāvyas and Mahākāvyas, such as Raghuvamsha, Kumārasambhava, Meghadūta, Kirātārjunīya, Naishadhacharita and the Shishupāla-vadham. Commentaries on Sūrya-shataka and Vakroktipanchāshikā are also said to have been written by him. He wrote brief notes on Devīshataka, which his grandson Kayyaṭa seems to have amplified and later on changed into the form of a commentary. Besides, several anthologists have quoted shlokas under his name, which goes to prove the existence of some of his other literary compositions which are lost, to us for ever. The verses, ascribed to him in the anthologies, being on various subjects convince us of the fact of his high literary attainments and versatile genuis.[1] He also wrote a commentary on Rudraṭa's Kāvyālaṅkāra which he referes to either by the name of Rudraṭa-tīkā or Alaṅkāra-tīkā (vide, एतच्चास्माभि: रुद्रटटीकायां विचारितं, एतच्चास्माभिरलङ्कारटीकायां सुविचारितम्[2] ।

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[1] See shlokas nos. 2, 150, 452, 1038, 3116, 977 etc. etc. Subháshitávali of Vallabhadeva Edi. Dr. P. Peterson and Durgadasa pp. 112. [2] Shlokas 21, Canto IV. Comm. Shloka 28. Canto VI Comm.

THE AUTHOR OF THE POEM

Māgh Bhaṭṭa, the author of the Shishupālavadha, was a native of Gujaradesha of which the capital was Shrīmāla, Māla or Binna Māla[1]. In the concluding verses of this poem he gives the short history of his father, Dattaka, grandfather Suprabhadeva, and the king Shrī Dharmalābha whose name is variously read by different manuscripts[2]. The correct name of the king seems to be Vimalata which also accords with that found in an inscription bearing the name of the king Vimalata with the date 625 A.D.

THE DATE OF THE POET.

Tradition places Māgha in the latter part of the 1100 A. D. as a contemporary of Shrī Bhojadeva who reigned about that time. On the strength of the date of composition

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1. See the 14th chapter, Prabhávaka-charita composed in the 2nd half of the 13th century A. D. by a certain Prabhàchandra.

2. Dharmanábha, Dharmanátha, Varmalákhya, Varmaláta etc. etc.

of Upamitibhāva-prapanchakathā (906 A D.), Dr. Klatt opines that Māgha lived in the early part of the 10th century A. D. But there is sufficient internal evidence to prove that Māgha may have existed in the beginning of or earlier than the 9th century A D. for Anandavardhanachārya, a famous exponent of the Dhvani school (850 A. D.) has quoted two verses by way of examples from the Shishupālavadham.[1] He is similarly posterior to Jinendrabodhi (650 A. D.), whose work Kashikanyasa is alluded to by the poet in the present work[2]. The date of Māgha ranges, therefore, between 65(A.D. and 800 A. D. But happily there exists an inscription[3] of a certain king Varmalata who flourished about 625 A. D. Relying on this, Māgha Bhatta may safely be placed in the latter part of the 7th century A. D. This also is in conformity with the consensus of scholars that Māgha is posterior to Bhāravi (634 A.D.), Bhatti (6th or 7th century), Kumāradāsa (6th century A. D.), Bāna (c. 625 A. D.), Subandhu (c. 600 A. D. and Nyāsakāra (650 A. D.)

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1. Cf. Shloka 26. Canto V ; Shloka 53, canto III.
2. Cf. Shaloka 112, canto II.
3. J. R. A. S. 1908, p. 499.

whose dates range between 550 A.D. and 650 A. D. This is also confirmed by the statement of Prof. Jacobi who says: "We cannot place Māgha later than about the middle of the 6th century A. D."

HIS STYLE.

It is interesting to observe that poets have been nicknamed for their pecular styles in composition. Kalidasa is nicknamed "Dipashikha-kalidasa" owing to the way in which he used the word "Dīpashikhā" (flame of the lamp); Bhāravi as Atapatra-bhārvi (parosal Bhāravi) and Māgha as Gaṅṭā-Māgha (Bell-Māgha). "We prefer this eloquence to the ingenuity which won him (Māgha) the sobrequet of 'Bell-Māgha' because of his cleverness in comparing a mountain, on one side of which the sun set while on the other the moon rose, to an elephant from whose back two bells hung, one on either side[1]".

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[1] Keith, History Sanskrit p. 130.

There is also an oft-quoted verse[1] to prove the statement that Māgha was a poet of great merit. It says that Kālidāsa is famous for his matchless similies; Bhāravi for the depth of meaning; Shrī Harsha for the use of sweet and appropriate words and lastly Māgha's poetry combines in itself all the three qualifications. A close examination of the Shishupālavadha, does no doubt, convince us of the truth of the above statement, but his free indulgence in artificiality like that of Bhāravi whom he has faithfully imitated in many ways has underrated the importance which it would otherwise command.

Notwithstanding the fact that our author seems to abhor the unnecessary strain of artificiality on poetry in vogue in his time, as is evident from a verse in Shishupalavadha[2], he is seen to fall in the same pit in as much as he indulges in the Tour de force like Subandhu and Bhāravi who is his ideal. Perhaps the intentional artificiality sometimes though more abnormal than that of the rival poets[1], which Māgha has taken fancy to may find its justification in the fact, that either the age in which he lived was an age of artificial poetry or Māgha wanted to out-herod the herod by parading his skill in composing Chakrabandhas, Ekākshari Shlokas, Anulomas and Pratilomas in such a way as was impossible for others to imitate[2].

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[1]. उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेश्चार्थगौरवम् ।
नैषधे पदलालित्यं माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः ॥

[2]. विषमं सर्वतोभद्रचक्रगोमूत्रिकादिभिः ।
श्लोकैरिव महाकाव्यं व्यूहैस्तदभवद्बलम् ॥

The Mahakavya becomes unintelligeble like a cross-word puzzle when its shlokas are composed in the form of Chakras, Sarvatobhadras, Gomutrikabandhas and what not. Shloka 41. canto XIX.

As stated above Māgha's model was Bhāravi as Kālidāsa was of the later. Bhāravi and Māgha are inseparably associated with each other in Sanskrit poetry. In fact, Shishupālavadha has been written in imitation of Bhāravi's Kirātārjunīya. We shall try to show later on how the two poems have a close resemblence. Though taking into consideration the vigourous language, consistant reasoning, lofty sentiments, spirited eloquence and high poetic expression which characterises Bhāravi we are led to believe that Māgha cannot stand comparision with him, yet the serenity combined with the depth of meaning not devoid of the loftiness of ideas pervades the present poem of our author whose deep knowledge of the Sāṅkhya, Vedānta and the Buddhistic logic all the more adds weight to the way in which he has handled his poetry or dived deep into its niceties with successful results. It is perhaps on this score that some of the critics hold the opinion that 'Bhāravi can maintain his grandeur only so long as Māgha does not put in his appearance. But when Māgha (the poet Māgha and the month of Māgha) commences his rise. the splendour of Bhāravi fades like that of the sun[1]'. Nor is this all. "He possesses much luxuriance of expression and imagination, and in the many love passages of his epic sweetness and prettiness abound." Good sense and simplicity of moral sentiments[2], harmonious blending of sense and sound, martial tone, delineation of commonplace ideas,

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[1] Cf. canto XIX, Shishupálvadha.

[2]· Cf. Ibid.

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1. तावद्भा भारवेर्भति यावन्माघस्य नोदयः।
   उदिते तु पुनर्माघे भारवे र्भा रवेरिव ॥

2. Cf.
   नालंभते दैष्टिकतां—सदाच्छटाभिन्नघनेन बिभ्रता—आयान्तीनामविरलरयं —सजलाम्बुधरारवानुकारी—यदपूपुजस्त्वमिह पार्थ—बिभराँबभूविरे—मध्येसमुद्रं etc. etc-

his effective force in the speeches of his characters and his flowery language, are also some of the outstanding features of his poetry. "Māgha distinguishes himself by his rarities; we find the idiom माजीवन् (let him not live); खलु with the gerund in the sense of prohibition; the gerund in अम् which is only common Brāhmana style; क्रम् (be weary) as a finite verb, as in the Bhatti Kāvya and Kādambarī; rare aorist forms, and the technical distinction between विष्वन् (eat noisely) and विश्वन् (howl).

BHARAVI AND MAGHA

As said above Bhāravi has influenced Māgha immensely and the latter has modelled his poem on the same lines as set forth in the Kirātārjunīya. Bhāravī eulogises Shiva while Māgha has the mead of praise for Vishnu. The prominent similarities have been noticed as under :—

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3. Keith, History Sanskrit Literature.

KIRATARJUNIYA	SHISHUPALAVADHA
1. Sage Vyāsa comes to see the Pandavas and instructs them to give up lethargy and make preparations to face the Kauravas in the coming war.	1. Nārada here visits Shri-Krishna in Dvārikā and insinuates him to kill Shishupāla.
2. A plan for the same is discussed by Yudhishthira, Bhīma and Arjuna.	2. Similar line of policy is here adopted by Shree-Krishna who discusses it with Balarāma and Uddhava.
3. Arjuna starts for the mountain Indrakīla where he performs penences.	3. Shri-Krishna starts for the mountain Raivataka where he encamps for a few days.
4. Description of the woodland scenery.	4. Similar description, similar metres and figures of speech.
5. Delightful forest trips, water sports, unions and separations of the lovers.	5. The sama here.

6. Shiva in the guise of lord of hunters sends a threatening message to Arjuna inciting him to fight.	6. Shishupāla's message and threats to Shree-Krishna through an ambassador and Shri-Krishna's preparation for war.

7. Tour de-force of both the poets with regard to the description of battles between Shiva and Arjuna (canto XV) in one case and Shri-Krishna and Shisupāla in the other (canto XIX)

8. In both the poems the authors have respectively begun first verse of the first canto with the word Shri and in the end of each canto the word 'Lakshmi' has been used to indicate the finis of the chapter.